

## KEY DATA

### ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

**2.8KM<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINE  
CLEARANCE IN 2021

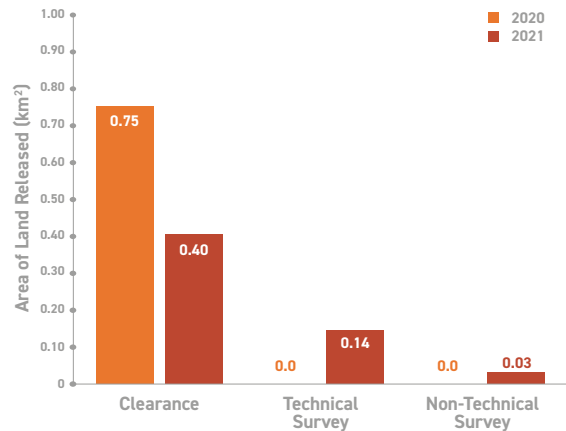
**0.4KM<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINES  
DESTROYED IN 2021

**66**

(INCLUDING 21 DESTROYED  
IN SPOT TASKS)

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Georgia should clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Georgia should continue to engage in bilateral political dialogue with Azerbaijan as well as multilateral dialogue with all stakeholders via the Landmine Free South Caucasus (LFSC) Campaign, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should grant access to The HALO Trust to complete survey and clearance of remaining mined areas.
- Georgia should develop a resource mobilisation strategy and engage with donors to secure the resources needed to complete clearance.

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- State Military Scientific Technical Centre (DELTA)
- Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Engineering Battalion of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Georgian State Security Service (SSS) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust

### OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The full extent of mine contamination in Georgia is not known due to access restrictions and lack of survey. According to official estimates, as set out in Table 1, Georgia has at least 2.8km<sup>2</sup> of contamination across six mined areas in the Tbilisi Administered Territory (TAT),<sup>1</sup> although the size of two of these areas is not reported. Contamination comprises both anti-personnel mines, and, in one area, also anti-vehicle mines.<sup>2</sup> Georgia also has 10,900m<sup>2</sup> of contamination across two mined areas in Abkhazia,<sup>3</sup> an autonomous republic outside of the Georgian government's effective control.

**Table 1: Mined area (at end 2021)<sup>4</sup>**

Territory	Region	District/ Municipality	Village	Type of mine contamination	Mined areas	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
TAT	Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kirach-Muganlo	Mixed	1	2,738,730
	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dushe	Kadoeti	Anti-personnel	1	24,000
	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho	Anti-personnel	2	28,058
	Shida Kartli	Khashuri	Osiauri	Anti-personnel	1	N/K
	Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali	Anti-personnel	1	N/K
<b>Sub-totals</b>					<b>6</b>	<b>2,790,788</b>
Abkhazia	Sukhumi	N/A	Lindava	Anti-personnel	1	10,500
	Ochamchire	N/A	Kindgi	Anti-personnel	1	400
<b>Sub-totals</b>					<b>2</b>	<b>10,900</b>
<b>Totals</b>					<b>8</b>	<b>2,801,688</b>

N/A = Not available N/K = Not known

The Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD) of Georgia and The HALO Trust consider this baseline to be evidence-based and accurate.<sup>5</sup> However, HALO cautions that the Georgian Government, through the HDCD, is in the process of conducting Georgia's first General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA), since 2011. This assessment may result in the current baseline being updated.<sup>6</sup>

In the mined areas of Barisakho, Kadoeti, Khojali, Osiauri, and at the Red Bridge in TAT, the full extent of contamination is unknown. The HALO Trust has faced challenges in securing the necessary permission and funding to be able to complete non-technical survey at any of them. In May 2019, however, HALO received permission to survey and clear at Kadoeti and Khojali, and in June 2022, HALO secured funding from Norway to conduct non-technical survey of these minefields. Non-technical survey was due to take place from August to September 2022.<sup>7</sup>

HALO also continues to advocate for permission for access to mined areas at Barisakho, Osiauri, and the Red Bridge, both through bilateral channels and through participation in the Landmine Free South Caucasus (LMFSC) Campaign, which brings governments and civil society organisations together to encourage dialogue and cooperation. HALO asserts that

both technical and non-technical survey are required at all the sites accurately to determine the size of the contaminated areas.

Estimates of the size of Kadoeti and Khojali minefields originate from HALO's initial non-technical survey of both tasks in 2009.<sup>8</sup> The Kadoeti minefield, which was laid in 2008, stretches along 950 metres of road near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with South Ossetia. A livestock accident in 2009 and a non-fatal vehicle accident in 2010 indicate that the area is still mined.

The mined areas at Khojali include two adjacent minefields about 12km from the ABL with Abkhazia. One of the two minefields is believed to lie along an approximately 300-metre-long path. In Barisakho, there are two mined areas close to a police station on the Russian border, which were laid to prevent entry from Ingushetia during the Second Chechen War. In Osiauri, a military base in the interior of the country, next to the main east-west road through Georgia, mines were laid around the perimeter of an ammunition storage area to defend the position in an event of an invasion.<sup>9</sup>

1 TAT does not include the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are outside Georgia's effective control.

2 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

3 Emails from Michael Montafi, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022; and (as Partnerships and Programme Support Manager), 26 July 2022.

4 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 26 July 2022.

5 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

6 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

7 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

8 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

9 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long and 2.2km<sup>2</sup> minefield consisting of densely packed lines of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines at the "Red Bridge" border crossings between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is the largest minefield in the Caucasus and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. The Red Bridge minefield affects more than 4,000 people. As at May 2022, there had been 88 incidents: 22 involving humans and 66 involving livestock. No new incidents were reported during 2021.<sup>10</sup>

There may also be mined areas in South Ossetia as a result of the 1990–92 Georgian–Ossetian war, and the more recent 2008 conflict with Russia. The HALO Trust had planned to conduct non-technical survey in South Ossetia, but following a preliminary fact finding mission to South Ossetia by the HALO Abkhazia programme in 2008, no permissions for access or clearance have been given by the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities. South Ossetia is effectively subject to Russian control and is inaccessible to both Georgian authorities and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) demining operators. As at May 2022, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remained the only international organisation with regular access to South Ossetia.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the minefields in TAT as noted in Table 1, five minefields located in the Gulripsh, Ochamchire, and Tkvarcheli regions of Abkhazia came to HALO's attention between 2019 and 2021.<sup>12</sup> HALO's original estimate of

the contaminated area, given in April 2021 as 10,300m<sup>2</sup>, was based on preliminary assessments made by the programme's explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams, following interviews with informants and limited technical survey during EOD call-outs in 2019–21. However, the original estimate of these tasks did not include a newly discovered mined area at the village of Lindava in the Sukhumi region. Situated a few hundred metres from a minefield cleared by HALO in 2011, contamination at Lindava was brought to the attention of HALO by an EOD call-out after mine clearance began in the area in 2021. This new task totals an estimated 14,000m<sup>2</sup>. HALO was able to begin clearance at Lindava, releasing 4,219m<sup>2</sup> of land and destroying three PMN-2 anti-personnel mines. The programme anticipates additional funding in 2022 to complete clearance of the remaining hazardous area at this site.<sup>13</sup>

DELTA reports that no areas of previously unrecorded anti-personnel mine contamination in TAT were added to Georgia's information management database in 2021.<sup>14</sup>

Georgia is believed to be free of cluster munition remnants (CMR), with the possible exception of South Ossetia, which is occupied by Russia and inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international mine action NGOs (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Georgia for further information).<sup>15</sup> Georgia remains contaminated by other unexploded ordnance (UXO), likely in South Ossetia and also within Georgia in former firing ranges.

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Georgia's national mine action authority is the Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD). Renamed after a reorganisation in January 2019, HDCD sits under the State Military Scientific Technical Centre, known as DELTA, within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).<sup>16</sup> The primary task of the HDCD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including overseeing the national mine action strategy and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC), and facilitating the development and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).<sup>17</sup> HDCD also undertakes some non-technical and technical survey.<sup>18</sup>

For all mine action-related issues, The HALO Trust communicates with HDCD.<sup>19</sup> The Georgian authorities are supportive of the granting of visas for international staff and the importation of demining equipment. The HALO Trust submitted several requests to the MoD seeking access to the remaining minefields, the last of which was submitted in April 2018. While, in 2019, HALO received permission to begin clearing two of the six remaining minefields, at Khojali and Kadoeti, permissions for the remaining four minefields have not yet been granted. HALO does not expect permissions for Barisakho or Osiauri to be forthcoming in the near future. This is mainly due to the perceived tactical value of these minefields to the Georgian military.<sup>20</sup>

10 Emails from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

11 Ibid.

12 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

13 Emails from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021 and 26 July 2022.

14 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

15 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020 and 31 May 2022; and Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

16 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016, and 28 March and 10 June 2019; and Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019; Decree 897 issued by the Minister of Defence, 30 December 2010; and Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A.

17 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015 and Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

18 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2 September 2022.

19 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 21 June 2019.

20 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 26 July 2022.

The Georgian government funds the running costs of the HDCD. This includes all salary and administrative expenses as well as the costs of non-technical and technical survey, QA/QC activities of ongoing clearance, and monitoring of stockpile destruction tasks.<sup>21</sup> It also funds the Engineering Battalion, which carries out some survey and battle area clearance (BAC).<sup>22</sup>

The national authority has received capacity development support from HALO Trust and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Outside regular liaison and information sharing, the HALO Trust did not provide any direct capacity development support to the national authorities in Georgia or the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities in 2021.<sup>23</sup> However, previously, HALO has provided training on IMAS, geographic information systems (GIS), clearance and survey techniques.<sup>24</sup>

The GICHD has provided training for HDCD staff on the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core database, ammunition storage, and technical survey.<sup>25</sup> In 2020, one HDCD staff member conducted an online course on IMAS and Compliance organised by the GICHD.<sup>26</sup> In 2021,

two members of DELTA/HDCD staff attended three trainings organised by the GICHD, which covered the management of mine action programmes, operational efficiency, quality management, and operations analysis.<sup>27</sup>

In 2021, one DELTA/HDCD specialist participated in EOD training provided by the Combat Engineer Battalion of the Georgia MoD and the US company, Golden West.<sup>28</sup>

In November 2021, a regional conference "Towards a Landmine Free South Caucasus", organised by LINKS Europe in cooperation with DELTA, took place in Tbilisi. The event was attended by government officials, diplomats, and members of civil society organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.<sup>29</sup> A further meeting was planned for the middle of 2022 to promote further regional progress in mine action.<sup>30</sup> The HALO Trust is also a member of the Landmine Free South Caucasus (LMFSC) campaign, which it has found to be a useful platform for advocating for the release of the remaining minefields in Georgia as well as continued lobbying for the accession of all three States in the South Caucasus to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).<sup>31</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

DELTA report that Georgia's draft National Mine Action Standards contain a standard on environmental management and policy, although The HALO Trust was not aware of this.<sup>32</sup> DELTA also states that all national and international demining operators are expected to abide by state laws relating to environmental protection when planning and conducting of demining operations.<sup>33</sup>

The HALO Trust has in place an environmental policy as well as strict environmental standard operating procedures (SOPs), which aim to leave the environment in a state similar to or, where possible, better than it was before demining operations, and in a state that permits intended land use once operations are complete.<sup>34</sup>

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

DELTA and The HALO Trust each has gender and diversity policies in place. HALO supports use of mixed-gender teams to conduct survey, which allows for greater engagement with women and children.<sup>35</sup> In 2021, HALO continued to collaborate with local women's organisations to increase the visibility of its work to women. The HALO Abkhazia programme was able to partner with United Nations (UN) Women in Abkhazia to distribute information about ending violence against women, including how to access UN Women-supported local shelter hotlines.<sup>36</sup> If HALO is given permission to work in the remaining minefields in the TAT, community liaison and survey teams will be mixed gender and inclusive of ethnic minorities.<sup>37</sup> HALO Trust's EOD teams in Abkhazia are mixed ethnic Georgian and ethnic Abkhaz.<sup>38</sup>

21 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May and 2 September 2022.

22 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

23 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

24 Emails from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019; Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 10 June 2019.

25 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

26 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021.

27 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

28 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form A.

29 "Georgia supports efforts to clear the South Caucasus from all landmines and unexploded ordnance", *commonsplace.eu*, 7 November 2021.

30 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

31 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

32 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

33 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

34 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

35 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.

36 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

37 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.

38 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.

There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance teams in Georgia, including for managerial level/supervisory positions although proportionately the number of women remains low. Among the HDCD's staff in 2020 and 2021, one of seven members, the GIS/IMSMA specialist, was a woman. While no women were employed by HDCD in operational roles or in managerial/supervisory positions in 2020 or 2021, 1% of military personnel within the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion were women in 2021.<sup>39</sup>

As at May 2022, women made up 28% of HALO Trust staff in Abkhazia, with 15% of managerial and supervisory positions occupied by women and 28% of operational positions occupied by women. There is also a female member of staff based in Tbilisi, dedicated to the administration of the Georgia programme (HALO's only member of staff outside Abkhazia). This slight decrease, from 36% of staff in the Abkhazia programme being women in 2020 to 28% in the first part of 2022, reflects a downsizing of the programme in 2021, when HALO reduced the number of BAC teams deployed to Primorsky, following completion of a large grant from the European Union (EU).<sup>40</sup> HALO Trust's EOD teams in Abkhazia are mixed ethnic Georgian and ethnic Abkhaz and comprise both men and women.<sup>41</sup>

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The HDCD uses the IMSMA database and, according to The HALO Trust, the data are accurate. Data archives go back to 2009 and are regularly updated, based on HALO Trust's operations reports and on work by the Engineering Battalion. The IMSMA database is updated regularly and is administered by a certified specialist within the HDCD, trained by the GICHD, who receives regular refresher training in the latest procedures.<sup>42</sup> In 2021, two members of DELTA/HDCD staff attended three trainings organised by the GICHD, which included operations analysis.<sup>43</sup> Previously, in 2019, HDCD personnel attended an IMSMA Core workshop, hosted by the GICHD and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Kiev (Ukraine).<sup>44</sup> In 2020, one HDCD staff member conducted an online course on IMAS and Compliance organised by the GICHD.<sup>45</sup>

The data in the national information management system are accessible to the HALO Trust.<sup>46</sup> HALO Trust uses its own IMSMA-compatible data collection forms that DELTA has approved while the HDCD QA/QC team also has its own forms.<sup>47</sup>

Georgia outlines how various government agencies, in particular the Defence Forces and the EOD team of the Georgian State Security Service, work effectively to report contamination discovered through their established networks and in response to information from local residents. The HDCD regularly collects, analyses, documents, and stores information on areas contaminated by mines or explosive remnants of war (ERW). The HDCD also compiles and regularly updates digital and printed maps of contaminated and cleared areas within and through the national IMSMA database. Finally, Georgia reports that cooperation on data exchange between all relevant ministries, national agencies, and foreign organisations is ongoing and effective.<sup>48</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

Georgia has a national mine action strategy. Its main aims and targets are focused on clearing the remaining mined areas (unless they are deemed to have military utility) and to clear other areas contaminated with ERW.<sup>49</sup> Implementation of Georgia's 2021 annual mine action plan was compromised by COVID-19 restrictions, poor funding of humanitarian demining operators, and national staffing

challenges. However, Georgia has a mine action plan in place for 2022. DELTA prioritises clearance in areas of high risk to the population, as well as land used for livestock and other agriculture, along with roads, border security, and other key infrastructure. In addition, Georgia has long-term plans for survey and clearance of mines and UXO at commercial sites to support the country's socio-economic development.<sup>50</sup>

39 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.

40 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 May 2021, 17 May 2022, and 7 and 10 June 2022.

41 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.

42 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

43 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

44 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

45 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021.

46 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.

47 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.

48 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form B.

49 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

50 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

DELTA further explains how, in the aftermath of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict, the safety of local populations clearly determined prioritisation of mine and UXO clearance. However, at this point in time, Georgia has no national level prioritisation system for clearance and clearance operations are conducted by HALO as and when possible and when resources allow. Clearance is also sometimes conducted at the request of ministries, organisations or commercial companies to facilitate safe infrastructure development.<sup>51</sup>

HALO collaborates with the national mine action authorities to determine annual operational planning and task priority. HALO uses an internal prioritisation matrix to grade tasks, taking socio-economic data (sex and age disaggregated) into account. Key considerations include accident history, existing evidence, population proximity, post-clearance land use, frequency of land use, direct and indirect beneficiaries, and the economic impact on beneficiaries.<sup>52</sup>

HALO did not carry out any activities in TAT in 2021 or 2020, due to lack of funding for clearance of the Kadoeti and Khojali minefields, the two tasks that have permissions from the Government of Georgia. HALO maintained only a residual presence in the TAT, with one Programme Administrator in place to support procurement and transfer of supplies and equipment required by the HALO programme in Abkhazia. HALO also maintains an International Donor Liaison Officer, attached to the programmes in both the TAT and Abkhazia. This arrangement is anticipated to continue regardless of whether HALO has active projects in TAT, as long as operations continue in Abkhazia.

In 2020, HALO secured three-year funding for its EOD work in Abkhazia and will maintain this capacity until at least 2023.<sup>53</sup> In Abkhazia, HALO's operations continued in Primorsky, along with responding to EOD call-outs.<sup>54</sup>

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## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

As at June 2022, Georgia's National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards Guidelines were drafted and awaiting approval by the GICHD IMAS department. Once approved by GICHD IMAS, they were due to be translated into Georgian and then sent to Parliament for approval.<sup>55</sup> The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) have been translated into Georgian but the translation of the IMAS remains ongoing.<sup>56</sup>

In 2021, The HALO Trust updated its manual clearance SOP to include:

- Two metres ODOL (One Deminer One Lane). The two-metre ODOL method has been developed as a more efficient technique, using the same principles as the one-metre ODOL;
- Set-up and signal isolation for the Ebinger 421GC Detector, due to its suitability for signals produced by mineralised soil, common in HALO's Area of Operations.
- Updates to the review process for making changes to safety distances.<sup>57</sup>

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The Ministry of Defence retains a small demining and EOD capacity in TAT. In 2021 the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion had one survey team (for both non-technical and technical survey), and one manual clearance team of ten personnel.<sup>58</sup> The HDCD coordinates and monitors operations and does not conduct any clearance activities. However, the HDCD does carry out non-technical and technical survey.<sup>59</sup> As previously, the Georgian State Security Service (SSS) EOD team did not carry out any survey or clearance but conducted EOD tasks in response to call-outs.<sup>60</sup> In Abkhazia, the emergency services (EMERCOM) have a small EOD capacity, although HALO Trust is generally relied upon to deal with all items of UXO.<sup>61</sup> EMERCOM did not conduct any mine clearance in Georgia in 2021.<sup>62</sup>

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51 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May and 26 July 2022.

52 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

53 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021.

54 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

55 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

56 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.

57 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

58 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May, 26 July, and 2 September 2022.

59 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2 September 2022.

60 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

61 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019 and 12 May 2020; and Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.

62 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact mine action in Georgia 2021, although to a lesser extent than in 2020, when all mine clearance activities were suspended in TAT, except for responses to call-outs and EOD spot tasks by the Georgian SSS EOD team.<sup>63</sup> DELTA reported that the impact of COVID-19 on operational capacity decreased in 2021, but that restrictions still made mine action challenging.<sup>64</sup> The HALO Trust report that COVID-19 did not have any impact on HALO's mine clearance operations in 2021. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Abkhazia in March 2020, HALO has taken a range of measures to ensure the safety of its staff and beneficiaries.<sup>65</sup>

The HALO Trust, which is the only international operator working in the country, conducts survey and both BAC and mine clearance in Abkhazia.<sup>66</sup> HALO's operations in TAT remained suspended in 2021 due to lack of donor funding. However, with funding now secured, non-technical survey of mined areas was due to take place in Kadoeti and Khojali between August and September 2022.<sup>67</sup>

In Abkhazia in 2021, The HALO Trust fielded a dedicated mine clearance team, consisting of four deminers, for the

first time since 2011. HALO also deployed two EOD call-out teams (totalling eight personnel).<sup>68</sup> HALO's BAC operations in Primorsky continued alongside responding to EOD call-outs. HALO did not expect any major changes to the number of survey and/or clearance personnel in 2022.<sup>69</sup>

HALO continued to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in Abkhazia in 2021 through the deployment of six HALO ambulances, serving hospitals, laboratories, and communities with patient transfer services and transportation of PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test samples and contact tracing teams.<sup>70</sup>

In 2021, the international demining company, SAFELINE Global, requested accreditation from DELTA/HDCD to conduct offshore survey and clearance of Poti Harbour, in order to allow some construction work to proceed safely. As at May 2022, the accreditation process was ongoing.<sup>71</sup>

In TAT, quality management (QM) is conducted by DELTA. In Abkhazia, The HALO Trust is responsible for its own QM.<sup>72</sup>

There were no demining accidents in Georgia in 2021.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 2: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2021<sup>74</sup>**

Operator	Manual clearance teams	Total deminers*	Mechanical assets/machines**	Comments
HALO Trust	1	4	2	First manual clearance team deployed by HALO in Abkhazia since 2011.  Also deployed two EOD call-out teams, (eight personnel). At Primorsky, HALO deployed two BAC teams (14 personnel), one sub-surface BAC team (8 personnel) one mechanical team (4 personnel), and one mechanical support team (4 personnel).
EOD Company of Engineer Battalion of MoD of Georgia	1	10	0	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	

\* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers \*\* Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2021

A total of almost 0.4km<sup>2</sup> of land was released through clearance in Georgia in 2021, destroying in the process 45 anti-personnel mines and 2,015 items of UXO (see Table 5). All clearance took place in Abkhazia; none in TAT. In addition, 21 anti-personnel mines and 85 anti-vehicle mines were destroyed in EOD spot tasks by HALO Trust (operating in Abkhazia only), and the

63 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021.

64 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

65 Email from Michael Montafi, The HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

66 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.

67 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

68 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

72 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

73 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

74 Ibid.



Georgian State Security Service SSS EOD teams (operating in TAT only).<sup>75</sup> The amount of land released through clearance decreased, compared to the 2020 figure of 0.8km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>76</sup>

No land was released through technical or non-technical survey in TAT in 2021, as was the case in 2020. In Abkhazia, 1.67km<sup>2</sup> was released through survey, of which 0.25km<sup>2</sup> was cancelled through non-technical survey and 1.42km<sup>2</sup> was reduced through technical survey (see Tables 3 and 4).

## SURVEY IN 2021

No mined area was released through survey in 2021 in TAT, nor in the two years previously, with HALO Trust still seeking the necessary permissions and funding to complete non-technical survey at the five mined areas remaining there. However, having gained permission in 2019 and securing funding in June 2022, HALO planned to conduct non-technical survey at the Kadoeti and Khojali minefields during August to September 2022.<sup>77</sup>

In Abkhazia, 25,453m<sup>2</sup> of mined area was cancelled through non-technical survey by HDCD (see Table 3), and 0.14km<sup>2</sup> was reduced through technical survey by HDCD and the Engineering Battalion of the MoD (see Table 4). This is a significant increase compared to the two years previously, when no mined areas in Abkhazia were released through survey.

**Table 3: Non-technical survey of anti-personnel mined area in 2021<sup>78</sup>**

Region/Village	Operator	Area cancelled (m <sup>2</sup> )
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti/Kulevi	HDCD	25,453
<b>Total</b>		<b>25,453</b>

**Table 4: Technical survey of anti-personnel mined area in 2021<sup>79</sup>**

Region / Village	Operator	Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> )
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti/Kulevi	HDCD	109,067
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti/Poti	MoD Engineering Battalion	32,451
<b>Total</b>		<b>141,518</b>

The HDCD and EOD Company conducted survey in two areas of the Samegrelo Zemo-Svaneti region; at v. Kulevi in March to April 2021, and at a former Coast Guard Base (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia), near Poti harbour, in October 2021 to March 2022. At v. Kulevi, survey showed no anti-personnel mines were present and technical survey was conducted to establish the possible presence of UXO or abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO). None was recovered and the area has been recognised as clear. At the former Coast Guard Base, near Poti harbour, survey and QA/QC were conducted to identify the possible presence of UXO/AXO. There too, no ordnance was found and the area has also been recognised as clear.<sup>80</sup>

## CLEARANCE IN 2021

In 2021, HALO cleared 397,766m<sup>2</sup> of hazardous area in Abkhazia, destroying in the process 45 anti-personnel mines and 2,015 items of UXO.<sup>81</sup> This is a decrease compared to 2020, when HALO cleared 753,903m<sup>2</sup> of hazardous area in Primorsky, Abkhazia, destroying in the process 155 anti-personnel mines, 3 anti-vehicle mines, and 12,208 items of UXO.<sup>82</sup> That said, HALO highlights that, thanks to securing donor funding, it was able to undertake clearance operations across a greater number of areas in Abkhazia in 2021 compared to 2020; when clearance took place only at Primorsky. Anti-personnel mines destroyed by HALO outside of Primorsky in 2020 had not been laid but were either stored in stockpiles or discarded in uninhabited areas.<sup>83</sup>

Having secured funding from the Embassy of Norway in Tbilisi, HALO was able to complete clearance of four tasks in Abkhazia in 2021 at minefields located in the Gulripsh, Ochamchire, and Tkvarcheli regions. HALO also conducted clearance at a newly discovered contaminated area at the village of Lindava, on the outskirts of Sukhumi, which was brought to their attention by an EOD call-out. Having cleared 4,219m<sup>2</sup> at Lindava in 2021, HALO estimates that some 10,500m<sup>2</sup> of mined area remains there. In June 2022, HALO had secured additional funding from Norway to complete the Lindava task later in the year. HALO is also seeking additional donor funding to clear the remaining known mined area, located in the Ochamchire region of Abkhazia.<sup>84</sup>

75 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

76 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021.

77 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

78 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

79 Ibid.

80 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 13 June 2022.

81 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022 and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust 17 May 2022.

82 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 28 April 2021.

83 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 28 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

84 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.



HALO continued clearance operations in Primorsky in 2021, where the anti-personnel mines destroyed were the result of BAC and mechanical clearance of an ammunition storage area explosion that took place in August 2017. The mines were scattered across the landscape as a result of the explosion and had not been emplaced.<sup>85</sup> With adequate funding, HALO Trust had originally hoped to finish the clearance of Primorsky by December 2021.<sup>86</sup> While this did not happen, HALO did complete clearance at Primorsky in July 2022, having received additional funding from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).<sup>87</sup> This resulted in total clearance of 3,143,245m<sup>2</sup> and the destruction of 100,042 items of UXO, including 3,866 anti-personnel mines and 7 anti-vehicle mines. This is since HALO's clearance began at Primorsky in August 2017.<sup>88</sup>

With the exception of the Upper Amtkel task in Abkhazia, all areas cleared by The HALO Trust in Georgia in 2021 proved to contain anti-personnel mines.<sup>89</sup>

HALO's ethnic Georgian and ethnic Abkhaz EOD teams, funded by the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), continued to respond to call-outs in the conflict-affected areas across the whole of Abkhazia. In 2021, HALO responded to 162 civilian call-outs and nine call-outs from the *de facto* Abkhaz military, resulting in the destruction of 17 anti-personnel mines, 4 anti-vehicle mines, and 372 items of UXO.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the State Security Service EOD team destroyed four anti-personnel mines and 81 anti-vehicle mines during EOD spot tasks.<sup>91</sup>

The Russian military reportedly undertook some mine clearance in the Sokhumi airport area in 2021. However, this was without any agreement or coordination with HDCD and DELTA has received no specific information on this.<sup>92</sup>

**Table 5: Mine clearance in Abkhazia\* in 2021<sup>93</sup>**

Region/Village	Operator	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed*	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Ochamchire/Atara	HALO Trust	4,003	2	0	2
Gulripshy/Amtkel Mountain	HALO Trust	7,802	0	0	0
Gulripshy/Upper Amtkel	HALO Trust	5,498	1	0	12
Tkvarcheli/Agubedia	HALO Trust	4,862	2	0	1
Sukhumi/Lindava	HALO Trust	4,219	3	0	0
Gudauta/Primorsky	HALO Trust	371,382	**37	0	2,000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>397,766</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,015</b>

\* No clearance took place in TAT in 2021. \*\* Anti-personnel mines destroyed at Primorsky were the result of BAC and mechanical clearance of the site of an unplanned ammunition storage explosion that occurred in August 2017. As such these mines were not emplaced but rather scattered around the storage area.

No target date has been set for completion of anti-personnel mine clearance in Georgia. DELTA reiterated in 2021 that, "given all the impediments, it is difficult to name specific timelines".<sup>94</sup> The Red Bridge minefield is Georgia's largest, clearance of which has been identified as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.<sup>95</sup> Georgia previously reported plans to start clearing the Red Bridge minefield in 2015, but after discussions between Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives only survey was permitted.<sup>96</sup> The HALO Trust conducted non-technical survey between 1 and 3 July 2015, and then began technical survey on 4 July 2015. The following month, however, the Azerbaijani military demanded that technical survey operations be halted.<sup>97</sup> During 2018, Georgia reported further discussions with Azerbaijan regarding the clearance of Red Bridge minefield.<sup>98</sup> As at May 2022, however, The HALO Trust had not been granted permission to restart clearance there.<sup>99</sup>

85 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

86 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021.

87 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 22 August 2022.

88 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 18 and 22 August 2022.

89 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 18 August 2022.

90 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

91 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

92 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

96 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.

97 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

98 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

99 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May 2022.

In 2021, HALO continued to advocate for permission from the Government of Georgia to begin technical survey and clearance of the Red Bridge minefield at both the bilateral level and through public advocacy, as part of the LMFC Campaign. The HALO Trust reports that, while there are indications from the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that progress has been made on general demarcation disputes between Georgia and Azerbaijan, there is still no clear evidence of progress towards Red Bridge clearance. The Georgian MFA stated in October 2021 that The HALO Trust remains the Georgian Government's preferred implementer for clearance of the Red Bridge minefield.<sup>100</sup>

DELTA remains committed and has stated that the demining of the Red Bridge area will be one of the most important questions taken to a regional meeting was scheduled for summer 2022. This regional meeting is planned between LINKS Europe, with assistance from DELTA and the Ministry of Defence of Georgia, as part of the Landmine Free South Caucasus project. Participation is expected from the national ministries and demining programmes of Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as international mine action organisations such as The HALO Trust.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to being denied access to the Red Bridge minefield, no permission has been granted to date for HALO to conduct survey and clearance operations of mined areas in Barisakho or Osiauri.<sup>102</sup> Barisakho has two mined areas are close to a police station on the Russian border and in Osiauri, a military base, mines were laid around the perimeter of an ammunition storage area to defend the position in an event of an invasion.<sup>103</sup>

HALO has maintained a residual presence in TAT, while seeking the, now secured, permissions and funding to

conduct clearance in Kadoeti and Khojali. This arrangement is anticipated to be maintained regardless of having active projects in TAT so long as operations continue in Abkhazia.<sup>104</sup>

Though HALO plans to maintain this residual presence in TAT, it expresses concern at the outlook for tackling the Red Bridge minefield, should HALO be forced to exit Georgia before necessary permission and funding to operate at Red Bridge are secured. HALO cautions that, while the Engineering Battalion of the MoD would be a suitable entity to deal with any residual contamination once all minefields have been cleared, it would struggle to conduct the large scale, systematic clearance that a minefield like Red Bridge would require. HALO also says, however, that, if permission to clear Red Bridge is granted in future, HALO would be prepared to return to undertake the clearance.<sup>105</sup>

Georgia has highlighted that funding and resources continue to be a significant challenge for national mine action, with only one international humanitarian organisation operating in-country (HALO), and limited resources available to the State's EOD Company, which conducts humanitarian operations, under the Ministry of Defence.<sup>106</sup>

In particular, Georgia describes how the HDCD lacks certain equipment and requires expert subject matter assistance regarding the creation and implementation of national mine action standards and national technical standards and guidelines, the elaboration of SOPs, as well as staff training on EOD Levels 1, 2, and 3; technical and non-technical survey; the management of mine action; and IMSMA database management. Additionally, HDCD requires further technical and financial support to conduct the planned General Mine Action Assessment, including support of QA/QC on cleared areas.<sup>107</sup>

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Georgia's national strategy provides for action to address previously unknown mined areas that are found after completion.<sup>108</sup> The Engineering Battalion of the MoD has been trained to carry out EOD, demining, and BAC by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Partnership for Peace and has the capacity to deal with any residual contamination once all the known minefields have been cleared.<sup>109</sup> However, Georgia expresses concern that this capacity to tackle residual contamination is limited.<sup>110</sup>

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100 Ibid.

101 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

102 Ibid.

103 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021.

104 Ibid.

105 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

106 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

107 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form E.

108 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

109 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021; and Michael Montafi, HALO Trust, 30 April 2021.

110 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.